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modern rock on cue

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sixpence

hokusPick

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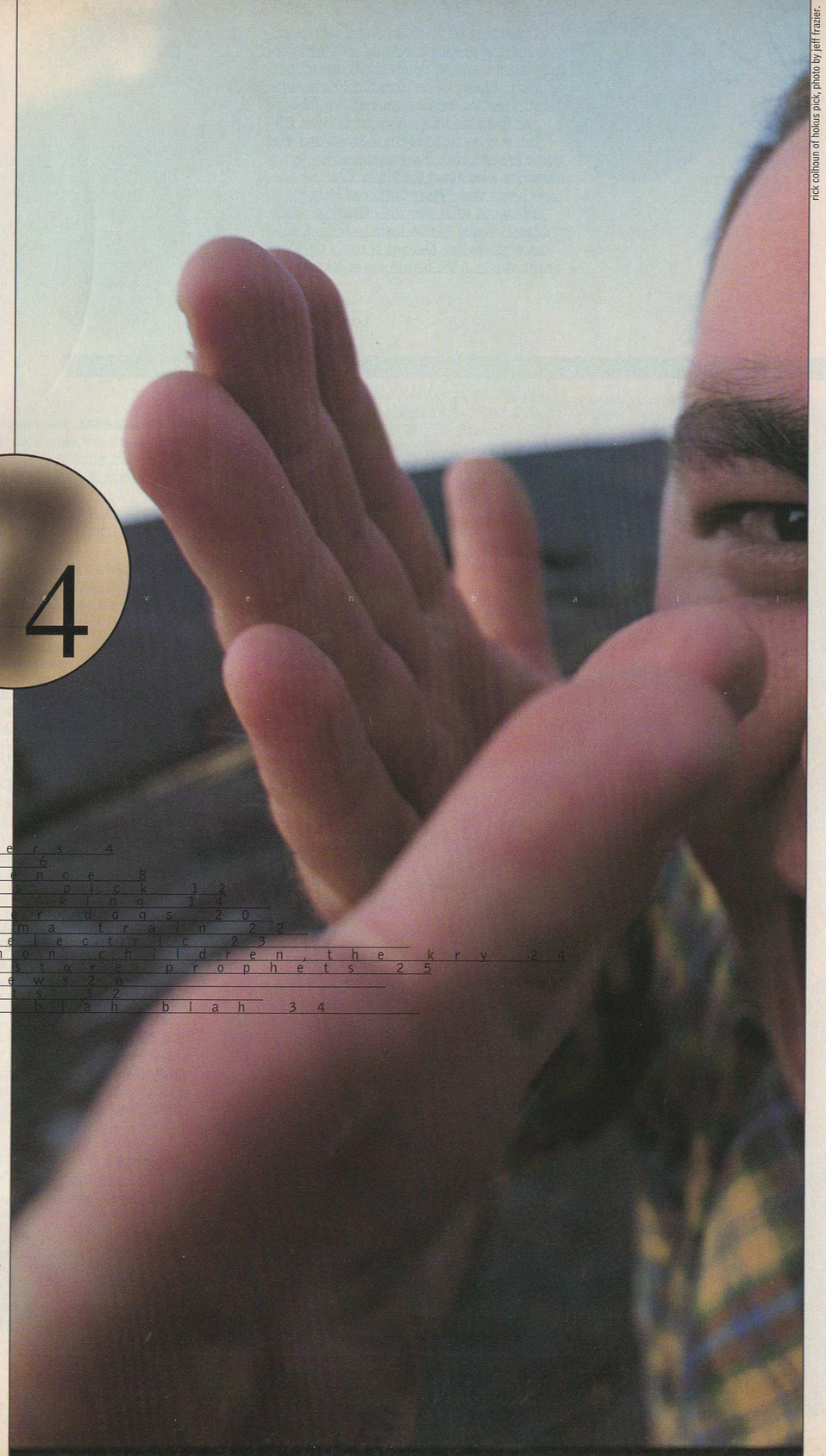


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METRO ONE

Diamante



rick colbourn of hokus pick. photo by jeff frazier.

N° 4

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I read through your Sept/Oct 7-Ball — it's amazing! I was really impressed with the information and articles on the bands. Great spotlight!! Prayer Chain is my absolute favorite band! Great incredible picture of Tim Taber! I also loved the little article on C-Stone '95! This was my first year at C-Stone, and that article brought back many awesome, fun, crazy memories. Also about the Prayer Chain article, I was happy that Prayer Chain had a chance to say exactly what Mercury means (the whole album). Cause I know there have been many concerns whether Mercury is really Christian or not. Again ... the article was so incredible!!

Keri Lockyer
London, Ontario
Canada

I was looking forward to reading your Curious Fools story — unfortunately, since your printer messed the page up, I can't read this. Will you be running a corrected version of the story? If not, do you know any other magazine doing a Curious Fools story? I'm really looking forward to the new album, and I'd like to hear what the band members have to say about it.

Molly Ashton
Grand Rapids, MI

This paper has been sent to you for good luck. The original is in New England. It has been around the world nine times. Send no money. Do not keep this letter. It must leave your hands within 96 hours. Joe Elliott received $10,000 and lost it because he broke the chain. You must make 20 copies and send them to friends and associates. Constanudeas received the chain in 1953. He asked his secretary to make 20 copies and send them out. A few days later he won the lottery of $2,000,000. Brad Daddit, an office employee, received the letter and forgot it had to leave his hands within 96 hours. He lost his job. Alan Fairchild received the letter and threw it away. Nine days later he died. Remember, send no money.

I am writing in regards to a problem I have encountered. I am interested in starting an alternative Christian group. As of right now, this group consists of me and three other women. None can write music. A couple can play instruments, I myself can play the trumpet and piano.
I need information on how to get the group started. I could appreciate any help and information you can give me, and if possible, a number to call of someone willing to help. I thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Janet Allie
Mount Vernon, OH

Janet: Here are some tips:
1) Learn to play instruments.
2) Practice said instruments.
3) Be sure and subscribe to 7-ball! (We may not have any tips for up and coming young bands, but we need the money!)

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LETTERS

I am glad you have answered the call God gave you. I also like the ministry. I hope you will continue to be a light in a dark world.

Kathy Thompson
Friendswood, TX

In your interview with MxPx, they said they're not a "Christian" band. Are they ashamed of their faith?

Howard Smith
Vainglory, NC

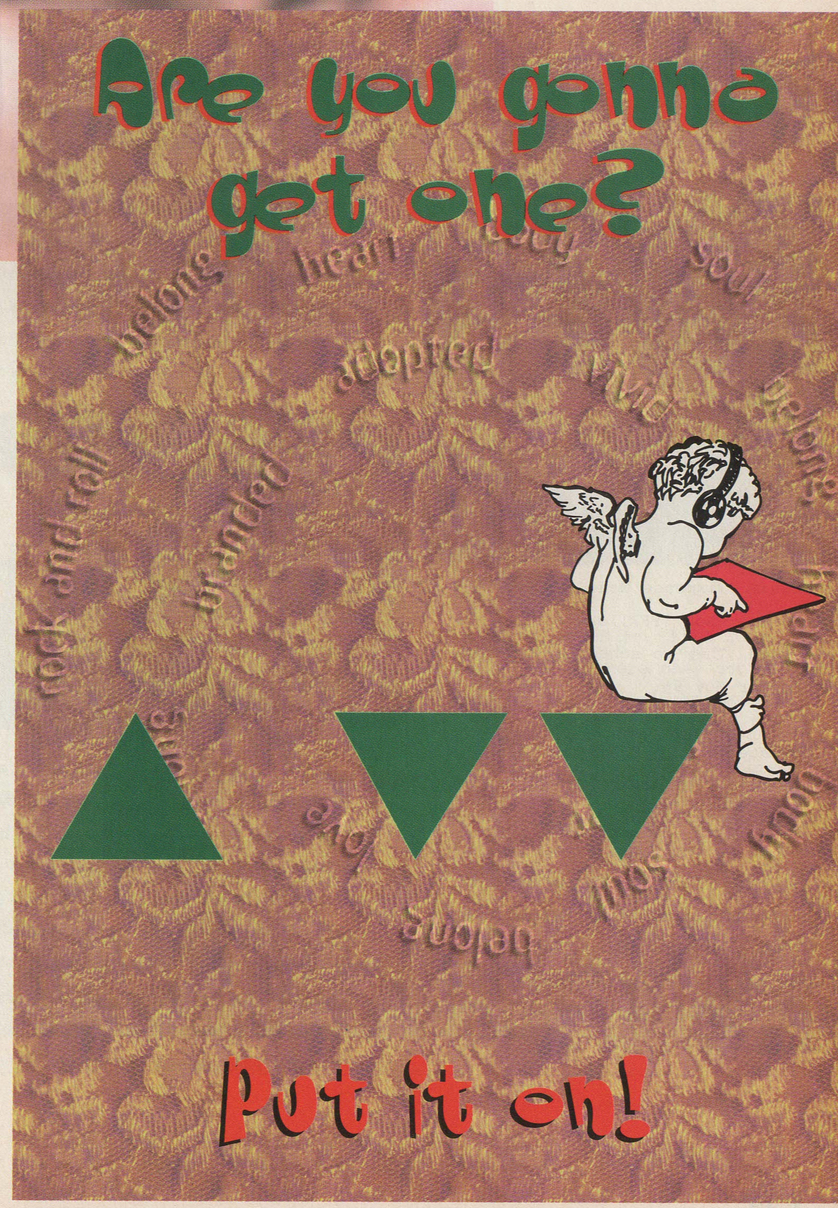
Howard: There's a difference between "Christians who are in a band" and a "Christian band." What the members of MxPx wanted to point out is that, while their songs reflect their Christian faith, stylistically they have nothing in common with, say, 4Him and Twila Paris. Consequently, it would be more appropriate — again, from a stylistic perspective — to find MxPx in the same bins with Offspring and Rancid.

I love your magazine and I really enjoyed December 95, because MxPx and Johnny Q. Public are two of my favorites. I want to comment on what MxPx said about Green Day: I'm thankful that reviews compared them to Green Day, because that is the reason I decided to check them out. There are so many new Christian artists out there, I need a comparison to help me figure out what CDs to buy.

Liz Strand
Minneapolis, MN
e-strand@bethel.edu

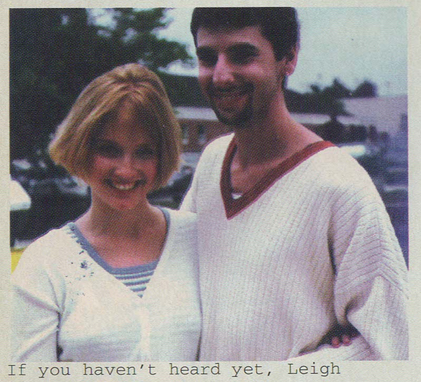
I really like your new magazine. For those of us who like this kind of music, it's nice to see someone doing a good job. At Cornerstone, I saw a bunch of concerts at your stage; thanks for putting on such a great show.

Doug Webster
Indianapolis, IN



News

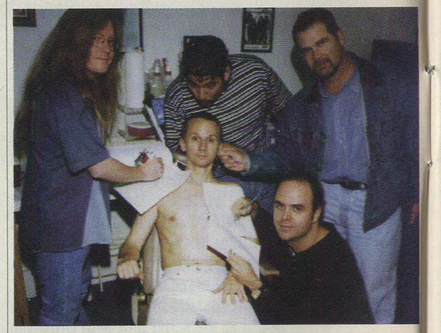
C H A N N E L



If you haven't heard yet, Leigh Bingham (Sixpence None the Richer) and Mark Nash (PFR) are officially engaged. They've scheduled the wedding for Nov 96.

Tourmates Prayer Chain and The Throes were both victims of separate crimes when the tour hit Dayton, OH: After a concert at the Canal Street Music Club, the Prayer Chain returned to their vehicle to find that it had been broken into. More than $2,000 in cash was stolen, along with the members' personal bags containing clothing, business records and other personal belongings. At the same time, Throes lead singer/guitarist Bill Campbell was going to dinner with a friend when they were car jacked and held at gun point for almost 30 minutes. The assailants brought Campbell back to the club to try and obtain more money from the club owner; when they arrived, the Dayton police were at the club investigating the Prayer Chain's robbery. As Campbell and his friend were released, the assailants fled. Campbell alerted the police at the club, who were able to apprehend the car jackers and recover Campbell's possessions. The assailants await trial in Dayton.

In other Prayer Chain news, the band is taking an extended break. "Each of us have various things we are working on," says vocalist Tim Taber. "Eric (Campuzano, bass player) and his wife are expecting a baby in January, Andy (Prickett, guitarist) is playing with the violet burning, and Wayne (Everett, drummer) and I have other projects we are pursuing on an individual level." Word has it Prickett and Everett are both going as support for The Choir's big farewell tour this March. The members of Prayer Chain, who've just wrapped up a 35-city tour of their own, plan to regroup in mid-1996 to determine the direction of future endeavors.



Yes, that's The Choir's Steve Hindalong with that "deer in the headlights" look on his face – the occasion was "Tattoo Records Inks The Choir At Local Tattoo Parlor," where, you know, Tattoo Records inked The Choir at a local tattoo parlor. The band, which has a new retrospective in stores right now, will have a new album on the new label come February, and will hit the road with Common Children and another act for a 30-city tour in March.

Steve Taylor was once again featured on a segment of MTV News, Oct 30 and 31. Kurt Loder introduced Taylor while playing clips from Taylor's video "Jim Morrison's Grave." In the interview, Taylor was asked his opinion on prayer in public schools, to which Taylor commented, "There are a lot of people who would prefer religion did not exist in public life, period, and I think that is a mistake." After the interview, Loder closed the segment by giving Steve's upcoming concert itinerary. MTV is planning several interview segments, where Taylor will answer questions on issues such as televangelism, religion in politics and contemporary Christian music.

New update on the Petra tribute record: Brent Bourgeois has produced the tracks from Jars Of Clay ("Rose Colored Stained Glass Windows") and Sixpence ("Road To Zion"). Dave Perkins and Lynn Nichols have produced tracks from The Stand ("Pied Piper"), Walter Eugenes ("Judas Kiss"), and join with Steve Taylor for something called "Louie's Solo." Others include Galactic Cowboys ("Not Of This World"), MxPx ("I Can Be Friends With You"), Plankeye ("All The King's Horses") and Grammatrain ("Wake Up"). Audio A and Newsboys have not picked their tracks yet.

Eric Champion will resurface in April, with an album produced by Charlie Peacock. Although Champion's known for his dance pop, the word is that he's very interested in moving towards a "Euro-influenced alternative style."



The Waiting have recorded some of their shows of late for a live project. In fact, they recently appeared at Rocketown (the club Michael W. Smith opened just south of Nashville); you'll probably hear some of that concert on an upcoming sampler. Brad Olson (lead vocalist, seen here strumming the guitar while brother Todd Olson, the band's guitarist, sits by) tells me they shot a video, but they're re-editing because the band was dissatisfied with it. If only more Christian rock bands would follow that example.

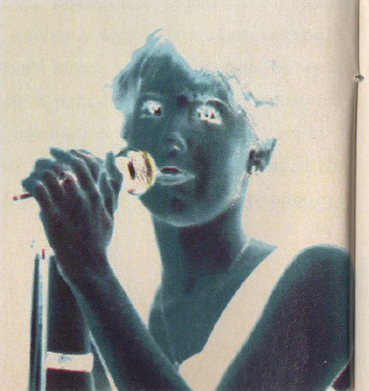


Speaking of Rocketown, when Love Coma recently played there they got to meet a new fan: Chester Thompson, live drummer for Phil Collins and Genesis for the past decade. Here you see Matt Odom, Chris Taylor, Chris Mattingly, Thompson, and Chris Dodds.

sixpence

sixpence

the quiet pieces



SOMEWHERE OUTSIDE OF SAN ANTONIO.



photo: ben pearson

AT HOME WITH SIXPENCE NONE THE RICHER

Chris Well

Matt Slocum hates bees. We're on the road to Dallas, a four-hour trip from his home in New Braunfels (the small German-Mexican town where Leigh Bingham also lives), to hook up with bass player J.J. Plasencio and drummer Dale Baker. Leigh has flown to Nashville for the week, visiting her fiance Mark Nash (the drummer for PFR), who bussed to N'ville from his Minneapolis home. We're taking Matt's mom's car, because his truck is still messed up from a recent trip where, making a sharp turn on a wet pavement, the band's loaded trailer shoved his truck off the road.

And there's a bee in the car.

"Is is gone?" he asks, glancing nervously into the rearview mirror. The weather's cold, but the back window is down.

We don't see it, so he remotes the window back up. For several miles — we've got the time — this ritual goes on.

During the adventure — we do, by the way, eventually eject the bee from the car — I get to hear Tickets For A Prayer Wheel, the new EP from Sixpence None The Richer. A lot. "Do you mind?" he asks, popping the tape back into the car stereo. It's not ego; he's only had a finished tape for a couple of days.



I don't mind. Tickets is a lot of fun, a between-albums extended-play collection that sports a couple of brand-new songs (leftovers from the longplay This Beautiful Mess), a couple of borrowed songs, a couple of instrumentals, and alternate versions of "Within A Room Somewhere" (the radio edit and the original demo).

As "Healer," one of the new songs, finishes up, he hits rewind. "I'm sorry ... I really like how this one turned out." As the song progresses, he points out some of the nuances, including the part where he whispers in the background and the part where the guitar is played backwards. By the end of the demonstration, he's playing air guitar. While driving. And checking for the bee.

A lot has changed with Sixpence None The Richer since they released This Beautiful Mess last spring. Leigh, the adorable homecoming princess of the band, has gotten engaged, much to the chagrin of many of her obsessed fans (she and Mark plan to wed this Fall). Tess Wiley, the raven-haired wildcat guitarist and vocalist, left the band during the summer to start a band of her own (she's already gotten the interest of Island and Elektra). Sixpence, for the moment continuing as a four-piece, has gotten interest from the bigger record labels, as well. One of the reasons I'm visiting them in Texas is because most of them plan to move to N'ville soon.

Life is in transition for the band, and Tickets serves as a casual snapshot as the band regroups.

"I think it was good to have an EP as a transition," Matt says. "It's good to have that freedom, where we're not so self-conscious. It's good to have that opportunity to make the transition in that context."

J.J. says Tickets shows the band compensating for the departure of Tess. "For myself, I'm thinking of ways to fill in space as a bass player, thinking of different chord progressions, different rhythms that may fill in better. The transition seems to be moving smoothly."

"It's cool to have documentation of the different stages of the band," Dale says. He points out another facet of the snapshot — these four have been touring for a year and a half now, and their growth seems to be captured on Tickets, as well.

In fact, where the genesis of Sixpence began with only a duo — Matt writing the songs, Leigh singing them — J.J. and Dale have started taking a more active role in shaping the sound of the band.

"This is the next progression after This Beautiful Mess," J.J. says, "and we're really growing as a band. The chemistry is really clicking, and when you see the live show, you see that we're really working off each other. We're really trying to paint this whole picture, and we all know what we're trying to achieve; so, all of our input comes together, and at the end you see this picture of what we're trying to do, musically and creatively."

Something else Tickets provides: A more complete picture of their personalities. Rarely do people see the whole essence of the band. Matt recalls one of his favorite articles written about Sixpence: "It did a good job of showing us both when we're serious and when we're having fun ... most of the stories are just about one or the other."

Tickets should help bridge the gap; we see the band growing as a tighter unit, but we also see the band can have fun. Leigh refuses to choose which of the two is more important. "I think one lends itself to the other," she says. "The fun part leads to the more serious things. We experimented with different ideas because it was fun, and that experimentation led to growth. They're equally important."

J.J. points to their remake of Leslie Phillips' "Carry You" as an example; as you listen to the odd, quirky rhythms, you may be surprised at what you hear. "We were taking ordinary, everyday things and playing them as instruments: We were using lampshades and shutters and beepers and keys, and we were throwing stuff down stairwells."

"That's what was cool," Dale agrees. "There was no pressure, so we just said, 'We'll have fun with this.' J.J.'s running around hitting all these objects in the room ... at the time, it was wacky and fun, but in the end, I'm really happy with how the song turned out. It sounds really good."

Leigh says the relaxed atmosphere made it easier to try new things. "It becomes easier to throw your opinions out. Once we had this chance, it should be easier when we do our next regular album."

Since Sixpence None The Richer spends an increasing amount of time on the road, they treasure their spare time. Dale mountain bikes and reads. Leigh likes swimming, soap operas, and singing in the bathroom (apparently, it helps her stretch her vocal range). Matt reads, watches movies and plays video games.

J.J., straight-faced, says, "I like to visit orphans and collect blankets for the homeless and help out Habitat For Humanity." The others, in true Three Amigos style, all chime in that's what they meant, too.

It's a difficult but acquired skill, deciding when J.J. is serious (he's easily one of the funniest musicians I know). Although he's joking now, later that evening, when the tape recorder is turned off and the notebook is put away, J.J. will ask a priest friend of his how he can help Habitat For Humanity build in Dallas, where J.J and his wife Tonia have a house of their own.

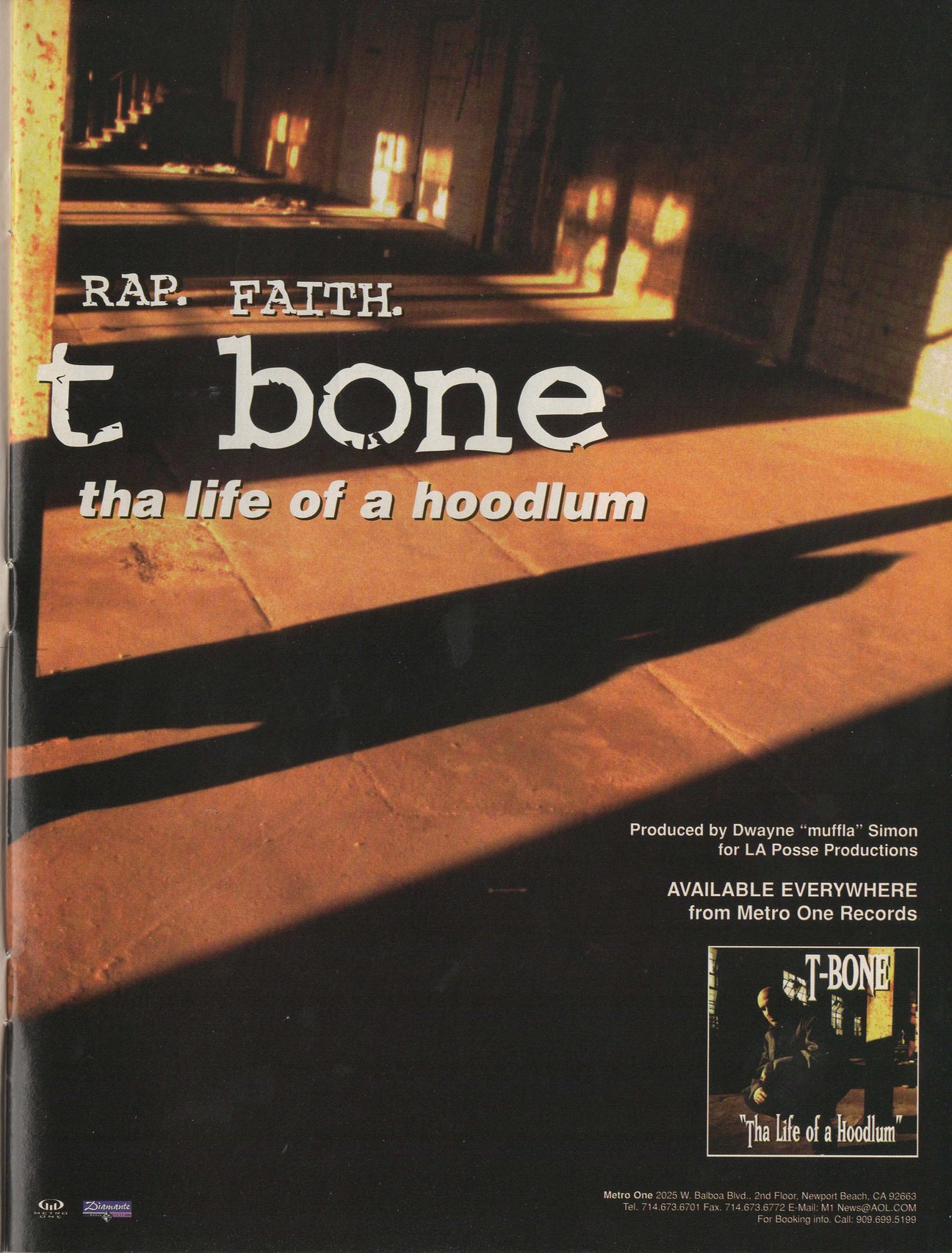
Matt, Leigh and Dale, meanwhile, are looking to move to N'ville in the coming weeks. In fact, Matt hopes to open a small studio for business there. Although J.J. doesn't plan to move anytime soon, he does wonder about opening a Mexican restaurant in N'ville. It took him two years to find one to his liking in Dallas, despite the fact that there seems to be more Mexican restaurants in Dallas than gas stations ("He can't find one that cooks like his grandmother," Tonia says).

All of this, of course, has to be worked around their road life; this spring, they're probably hitting the road with Black Eyed Sceva and Dimestore Prophets. Then it's festival season.

Although they love to come to your town and play, there is a personal cost involved: The road takes so much of their time and attention that Matt's afraid to start a relationship. "I've seen married friends of mine who've had problems because they spend so much time on the road. I just don't think it would be fair to pull someone into that."

J.J. agrees that relationships are a premium when you're always leaving home (he recently turned down an invitation to tour with Jars Of Clay, so he could spend more time with his wife).

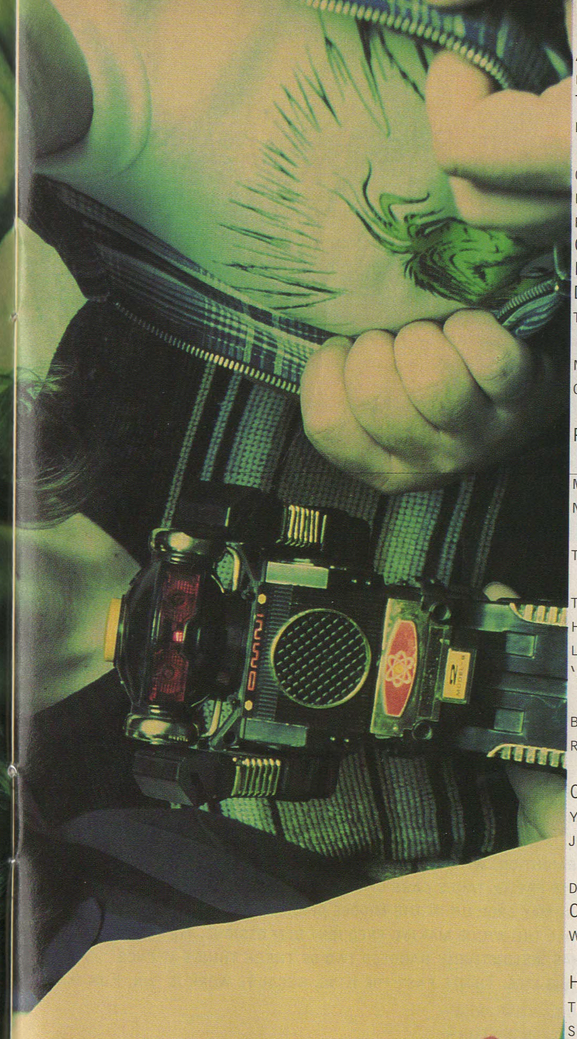
"We like to see friends and family," J.J. says of life at home, away from the band. "I like to play tennis with my wife. When we get back from a tour, we just absorb as much of life as possible, so we can go out and do it again." 7



HOKUS PICK

photo: jeff frazier







By J. Peter Roth

At a point along the endless road that Hokus Pick calls touring, the band waits to take the stage in Sault Saint Marie, Ontario, Canada. The show is more than sold out, much to the local fire marshal's dismay, but to the elation of a band new to town on a Tuesday night.

Guitarist Matt Pierrot chats casually with a few self-condescending remarks thrown in for a cheap laugh, while lead singer Russ Smith runs lights and bassist Dave Strilchuk runs the technical side of the show for the Undertakers, a fellow Canadian band sharing the stage with them. Pierrot and drummer Rick Colhoun will then run the show for the second act, the Craig Douglas Band, also from Canada. The opening bands will then run the show for Hokus Pick that night.

It's no coincidence that there is no roadie to be seen: It's not only easier on their pocket book, but it keeps the bands' egos in check.

"We figured we could have a crew — or three bands," Pierrot explains. "No roadies, no egos."

Though it may sound like a kind of goofy comment from the mouth of a rocker in the oh-so-introspective 90s, Hokus Pick is nothing less than a serious band.

However, they are quick to let you know they don't take themselves too seriously.

"We don't like the bands that stand on the side of a mountain and stare out into space and say, 'we're cool,'" Pierrot says, in his best "pretentious artist" voice. "We don't like the guys whose latest release is the biggest thing in the whole world. We're like, 'it's an album, OK?'"

The members of Pick want to define themselves as a true band, four equal owners and writers: a unit, something, they say is rare in the music scene today.

"Naturally, you tend to not have bands," says drummer Colhoun. "You tend to have groups of people. You have Petra, and you're not sure who's going to be on guitar from week to week. I just don't like that vibe."

He cites U2, the Beatles, R.E.M. and DC Talk as consolidated bands, who allow all their personalities to be visible. Colhoun says one-time fellow touring nomads Audio Adrenaline would qualify, too, if they still had their original drummer.

Colhoun is proud of the fact that in the twelve years of Hokus Pick, they have never had a member leave. And he is adamant that it will never happen. "We all have everything in the world sunk into this. It's like a marriage, it really is. Everything is pretty much identical when it comes to communicating and giving and forgiving and understanding and loving."

Hokus Pick's latest, Bookaboom, seems to underscore this investment as a band, tracing where they have all been as a band so far. Colhoun says it indulges in the personal experiences that influence their music, taking listeners for a punchy surf ride over a moshing crowd of emotions, love and spiritual struggle, with childlike imaginative charm.

Simply put, the music — like the band — is tight, light and profound. The name of the record, however, was more in fun: The Canadians picked the name of a hockey player (New York Islanders' Jeff Bukaboum). They thought the name was cool, so they changed the spelling a little and slapped it on their alum.

But the story they will tell you around the campfire is that "Bookaboom" is the name of the robot on the cover, "coming back one day to take over the Earth and squash all the Earthlings for the miserable swine that they are" (Colhoun likes that story best).

They say they plan on taking all of these stories — this story about the robot, the story of the band, and the story reminding audiences that Christ died for them — on their perpetual tour. But playing is not their ministry.

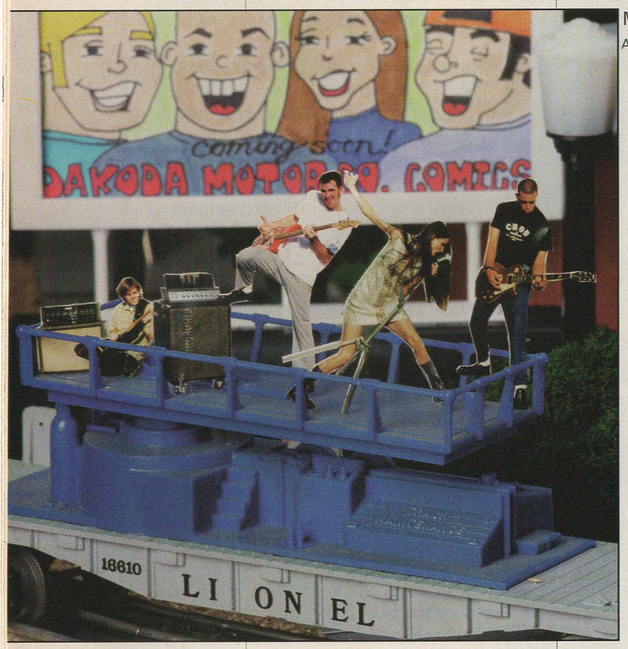
"It's just entertainment," Colhoun says. "The ministry really happens with the kids that you get to talk to and the families you get to stay with." He adds, "The biggest ministry we have as a group is to each other." 7

P E T E R K I N G

d a k o d a m o t o r c o

MTV Surfing and Rock & Roll

By J. Peter Roth



It's not the first place you would expect to find stubble-headed, surfboard toting, MTV hosting, rock n' roll star Peter King: In front of his new Mac computer, loading software.

For King, this is a little bit of free time. But then, life on the road, the recent completion of the third Dakoda Motor Co album, hosting MTV's Sandblast and, of course, surfing all add up to freedom and pastime for King.

On a November day in San Diego, King takes in his breakfast and plays with his new computer, while talking openly about life and his three jobs — a life he finds so easy to wake up and face every morning, straight on, with his own blunt and opinionated style. He freely takes care of phone calls and other business that may crop up in the middle of discussing the ebb and flow of his life, all the while making frequent digressions. He acts as though he has instinctively handled two or three things at once throughout his life. That's easy for King, because work is fun. Fun is work. The lines between the two often blur together.

"Nothing I do I would construe really as work," King admits. "Because I have friends who really work, you know. Laying tile is working." However, he calls what he does right now a "sun up to sun down job."

The three facets of his life — surf, music and video — do mesh together at convenient times: Within the past year, he was able to snowboard in Aspen while shooting Mt. MTV, a winter version of MTV Beach House; and on both Dakoda video packages, you can see King riding a board in all his buff splendor.

The latest project demanding most of King's attention is another band, formed with surfing cohorts. The excitement of this possibly being King's "next big thing" is easy to understand, when he returns from one particular phone call: "T Bone wants to hear some music," he says of renowned producer T Bone Burnette, mimicking the voice he spoke to with comic undertones. Then, he acts as





though he has reached a point of enlightenment. "I got to record those four tracks ... this could be really big."

He knows that many rising stars hope to be produced by the legendary producer. Counting Crows held their breath after a similar phone call at one time. And we all know the former Bob Dylan band-mate and U2 crony was the best thing that ever happened to Leslie/Sam Phillips.

King and fellow waveriders Kelly Slater and Rob Machado — collectively called "Liquid," for now — already have several songs written and are working on a deal with Epic Records. In the backs of their minds, they know they could join the ranks with Counting Crows and Sam Phillips next June, when the new project is slated to be completed.

King says the new venture is not a complete departure from Dakoda, musically or professionally. He describes the new band as having a more acoustic feel than Dakoda, but still similar in sound. Surprisingly, King says that, other than to "goof around" with his two friends, he really felt no need to make the musical departure.

"I don't feel a need ... it's a band. I only do what's fun. I'd never do anything I didn't want to do."

He started his climb to his successful career at the age of thirteen. After he had suffered a concussion following a skateboard accident, his father cut his skateboard in half. So, braving the ocean, he followed his friends on to the waves and began surfing — though he was sorely frightened of the ocean at the time.

Surfing then begat the rest, King says.

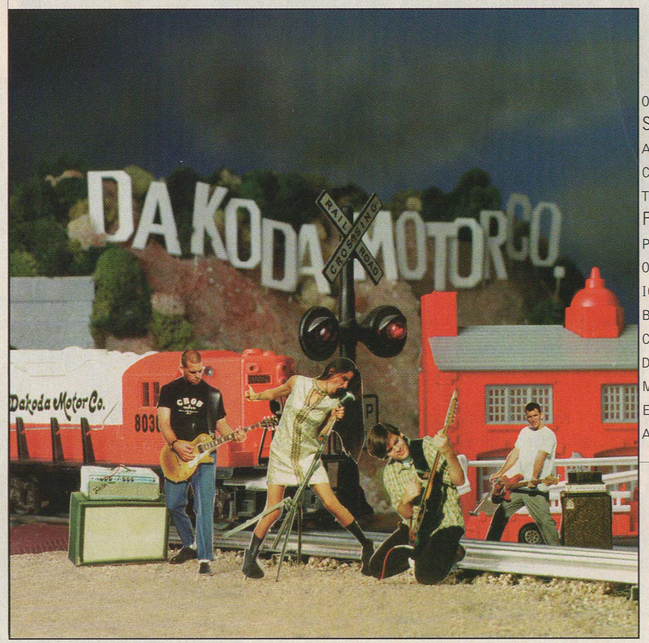
About a year or so later, he picked up a guitar for the first time, then began to bang out his own songs.

King, now 28, says he grew up believing in God at "a Presbyterian church up on the hill" in San Diego. Then, again at the age of 13, someone told him about the concept of salvation. "As soon as

I finally heard a guy I respected telling me you had to be born again and all that, and explained to me about the Bible, then I got really stoked."

His twin passions of Christianity and surfing act as a guide to his somewhat impulsive directions. It's the whole culture of the two that have formed who he is as a musician, as a video personality and as a person.

In fact, the host spot he landed on MTV's Sandblast came after he filmed a commercial for the Surfrider Foundation, a philanthropic organization dedicated to keeping beaches open and clean. The producer of the commercial suggested that King audition for a



new sports show MTV was creating. King went to the studio and read a few lines in front of a camera, then met the show's producer, Greg Johnson. The two hit it off, reminiscing about old punk bands, and the rest is history.

"It's a funny job. I go from watching MTV and laughing at people and going, 'ha ha, that person's so lame' ... and now I'm one of those people that somebody, somewhere is going, 'ha ha, that guy's such a dork.' And I could care less, you know. Believe me."

They're now preparing to record 50 new episodes of Sandblast for next season, and as many as 10 MTV specials that King will host are also in the works. While some would make a big deal out of "a Christian on MTV," King says many Christians misunderstand what MTV, or the Christian life in general, for that matter, is all about.

"Working at MTV is no different than going into a 7-11 and being a Christian," he says. "I have a hard time usually working with the cult-faced, glowing Christian mentality. You know, the 'Brother, brother, I can do a sloppy job because I'm a Christian' mentality. I'd much rather work with people who are hard workers whether they're Christian or not."



Here is where one sees the lines of what is considered work and what is fun for this confidently complex personality starting to blur.

"None of my bands are serious," King says. "Don't for one moment think that we're serious. We have fun. That's why we do it. It's not a job that is serious, and I could care less what people think of my music."

He makes no bones about what he does. He doesn't spiritualize his music. About three out of every ten DMC songs are about God — the rest are about friends. King says that better relationships are made by just hanging out after concerts, or just talking about common interests, than anything else. "We're not dealing with people's spiritual lives. We're not a traveling preacher show, I don't want to act like I go into a relationship with someone to evangelize them. That is so self-righteous.

"I mean, Christians really have this mentality that they have so much to offer someone. And the reality of it is, you may not have anything to offer anyone. Even though you're a Christian, you may be such a dud in your own life that you need to get your Christianity together and just live it. That's how you're going to be a witness. When you start living for Christ, instead of going out trying to find people, God will bring people to you."



He and DMC are resting in the fact that their last album, which sold 120,000 copies, is at the ceiling of record sales in the Christian industry. They now, with new lead singer Melissa Brewer, have sought out the more mainstream — and easily attainable — Automatic Records, a division of Atlantic Records. He also pursued a highly visible position on MTV.

At the same time, he doesn't see the benefit of seeking someone to witness to while surfing or playing music. He says that is where many Christians miss the point; they should just forget about seeking "secular" airtime and just seek to be the best they can be. Most of all, they should just desire to interact with others.

"I don't get a lot of the youth group mentality, that God is some sort of an exclusive club."

He went outside of the "club" and began to work for MTV. This is just a job for King. Many people think he has crossed the lines, which is one thing people think he cares about. "Nobody cares if a band is Christian; nobody cares if a band is a Satan worshipper. All that anybody at MTV cares about is: Is there a reason to play this; is it going to keep people's interest; is it a good song. Those are the only things that matter.

"Christians are so stupid to think that, 'oh, they're not going to play this, man, because they're evil.' What are you talking about? How much MTV do you watch? I mean, surprise, you haven't seen Petra on MTV. Oh, then Michael Sweet ... the most atrocious, horrible music you've ever heard. And the guy's thinking MTV ain't playing it because he's a Christian?"

King says he doesn't care about his videos getting on MTV — he doesn't want to watch himself on MTV. He has other things to do, outside of MTV, outside of DMC, outside of surfing. There are demos to record, phone calls to make, surfboards to lend ... fun to be had. And there's only eight more hours of sunlight left today to do them.

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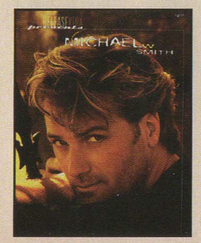
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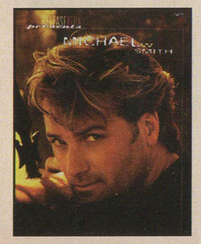
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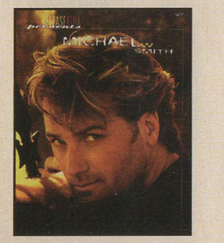
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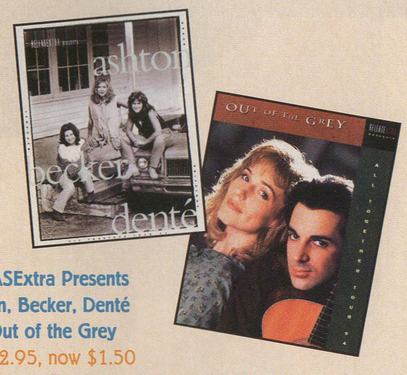
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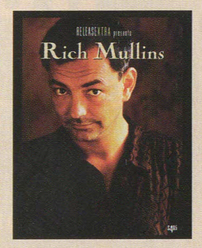


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LEADER DOGS FOR THE BLIND
By Chris Well

While not unprecedented, it certainly is unusual: Leader Dogs For The Blind is one of the certified buzz bands of late, culling fans from all over for Lemonade, a sweet-n-sour mix of heavy grooves, heavy melodies and heavy metal (all with industrial flair). All this, and Leader Dogs isn't even an actual band.

Of course, that could change. "I'm trying to put together a band," says Lyndon Perry, the primary force behind Lemonade, along with producers Dwight and Grant Mohrman. "Depending on how large this becomes, we'd consider a tour. We'd at least like to play regionally."

Perry, by day a shift leader at a Flint, Michigan manufacturing plant that makes circuit boards, started Lemonade essentially as a lark. He and Grant (who has a band of his own, Shirts And Skins) got together to make music a few years ago, mixing hip-hop beats and heavy metal, a recipe that was still pretty fresh at the time. "Then other bands started doing that. When it got popular, we stopped."

Then label R.E.X. came around, looking for demos for their Demolition 2 collection, and the pair offered up "Numb." The track went over well enough that, when the Mohrmans called looking for production work, the label asked for a whole "Leader Dogs" album.

"We scrapped all of the old songs and started fresh," Perry says. "We started mixing industrial samples, and I'm a melody freak, so we ended up with something I call 'industry and melody.' I knew we'd end up with a good album because Grant and Dwight are good producers ... but I was worried from the start, because we didn't know what sound category our band would fit into. We'd never played before, so we didn't know what we'd sound like."

The end result has brought comparisons with a lot of big names in "smart metal," including King's X, Filter and White Zombie. "Those are huge compliments," Perry says with humility. "King's X is probably the biggest influence on me; Ty Tabor is amazing. But we're not trying to deliberately sound like them. We wanted our own sound.

"We used White Zombie as a reference, because we wanted huge guitars; but when we got our singer, Derek Cilibraise, he has a full, deep voice like the lead singer for White Zombie, which made us sound too much like them. So, we had to move away from that. I had wanted to write rhythmic lyrics like White Zombie does, but since we needed to move away from what they were doing, we went in a more melodic direction.

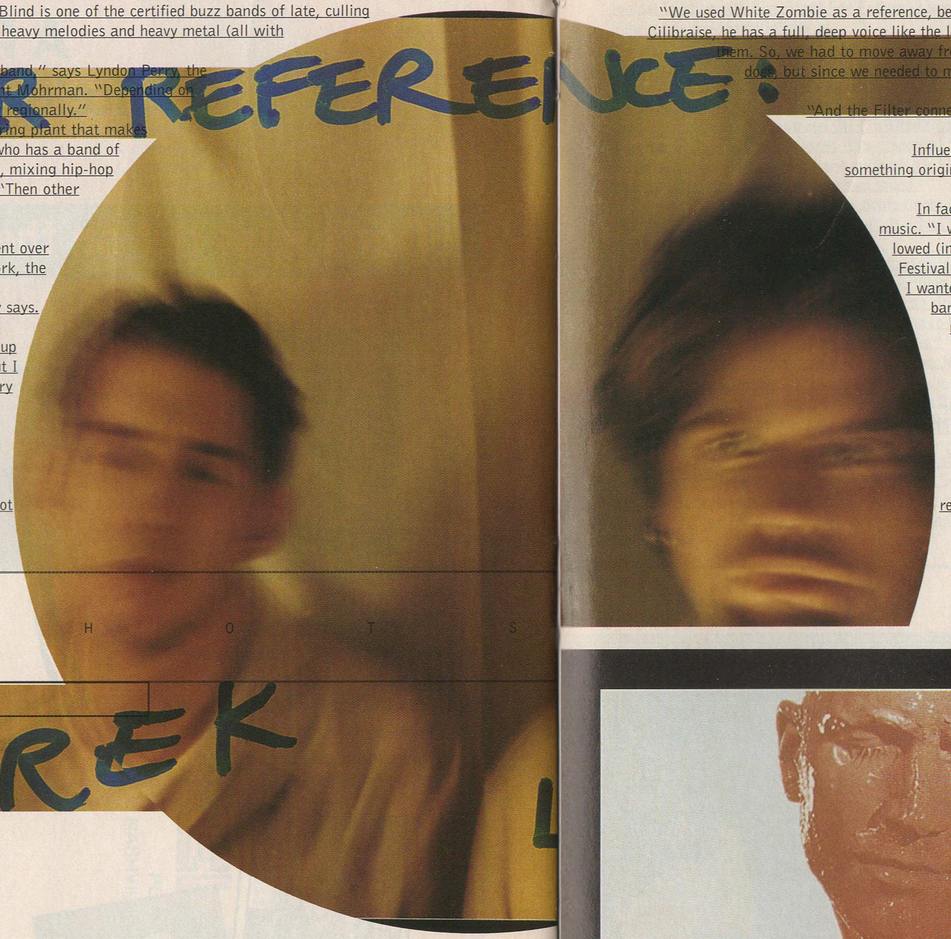
"And the Filter connection makes sense, because Grant worked on the Filter album; he works at the studio where they mixed it."

Influences or not, the highest priority for Leader Dogs was to carve out something original. "If there's one thing I hate about Christian music, it's all the carbon copies. We didn't want to do that."

In fact, until this summer, Perry had all but lost his taste for Christian music. "I was fed up with it," he says, noting the few exceptions he still followed (including Charlie Peacock and Steve Taylor). "But the Cornerstone Festival this year renewed my faith ... we were working on the album and I wanted to see what was out there. There were a lot of good alternative bands at the festival, and Fleming & John were great. We wanted to make something as fresh as we could, and there didn't seem to be anybody at the festival that was heavy and dancy."

Future plans for the "band" will have to wait, though: Perry and wife Michelle are expecting their first child very soon (check out "Sprout" on the record). "When the baby comes, I'll spend a good month doing baby stuff. Then I can worry about the rest of it."

After that, he's looking for a rhythm section and maybe even another album. "I would like to come out with more," he says, reflecting on how far he's already come with a 'fluke.' "If it works, I'll pursue it, but I'm not going to squeeze success out of it." 7



leader dogs

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FOREFRONT



GRAMMATRAIN *grammatrain*

By Steven Roth

"Right after Kurt Cobain committed suicide, I heard a lot of Christians saying, 'well, he deserved to die' or 'he was just a loser.' That really bothered me," recalls Pete Stewart, explaining the background to Grammatrain's "Undivine Election," one of the songs found on their label debut Lonely House. "It was such an ungodly response ... so un-Christlike. I mean, here's this depressed man who just committed suicide." An admitted Nirvana fan, Stewart says he took the news of Cobain's death pretty hard, but even more so, the lack of sensitivity from members of the Christian community.

"The song is my response to the hypocritical attitude we as Christians, myself included, tend to have at times. God has a divine election as to who gets saved; we seem to think we have our own system, where we can decide who should make it."

Welcome aboard Grammatrain — Northwest hard rock with all the angst and uncertainty that has made Seattle famous. Yet the trio of Stewart and brothers Paul (drums) and Dalton (bass) Roraback add a dimension alien to many of their colleague's offerings: tracks that all but refuse to train wreck themselves on the rails of godless nihilism.

In a twist of what some might consider ironic fate, it is Christian rock pioneer and ForeFront label exec Eddie DeGarmo who is responsible for breaking the band in the Christian market. While making a late night run to return a video rental, DeGarmo happened to hear one of the band's cuts on a Nashville radio show featuring indie acts. After a two week search by the label's A&R department, he caught up with Stewart's answering machine.

"That was very weird," confesses Stewart, who as the son of an AOG minister, grew up listening to DeGarmo & Key. Breaking into a mock Tennessee accent, he relives the message: "This is Eddie DeGarmo and ah have this record company in Nashville ..." Stewart breaks off, laughing. "Like I don't know who he is."

Not really sure the Christian market was where they should head, Stewart says the band had been leaning towards a smaller, secular label who wanted to sign them.

"Eddie just really pressed. 'Give me a chance to at least talk to you guys before you sign with this other label.' We were just being nice when we said, 'Well, OK.'" As the story goes, DeGarmo managed to win out, impressing the band with marketing plans that include forays into the secular college arena. "We were totally surprised because this is a new thing for them; they've never done a band like us."

The single that caught DeGarmo's ear was "Believe," a song about Stewart's personal struggles with faith and doubt. "It was written about a period in my life when I was really struggling with my faith, having a hard time knowing whether I could hang onto it, because of all the questions I had. Yet, I could never come to the point where I could drop it.

"As human beings we're trying to understand an infinite being, God, and His whole redemption plan for us. I don't think we're capable of understanding that 100 percent. So the song is me coming to the realization that that's the way it's always going to be: a struggle to maintain faith even though I cannot totally comprehend everything I'm believing in." 7

By Chad Bonham

Attaching labels to the music of Joy Electric is a tricky process. As far as Ronnie Martin is concerned, that just translates into a job well done. Martin's one-man-electronic-band utilizes sounds in an attempt to create infectious, melodic pop, unique to the modern music scene.

"I don't put my music in a category," he explains. "I don't call it techno or house and I don't call it ambient or any of those other titles given to bands that are using technology for their sound. I don't want anyone to be able to describe my stuff. I don't want it to have the boundaries of a label."

Martin, whose brother Jason is the frontman for the popular band Starflyer 59, has done a good job of avoiding that trap. In October, Martin furthered his technological journey with Five Stars For Failure, a seven-song EP, a follow-up to Melody and a precursor to this February's full-length follow-up.

"The next full-length album is going to be kind of one-dimensional," Martin says. "It's more or a pure electronic thing. I'm not using any samplers or drum machines. I'm getting all the sounds from scratch from the synthesizer. This next album is going to be the purest electronic thing Christian music has ever had. I'm just trying to make the ultimate pop record."

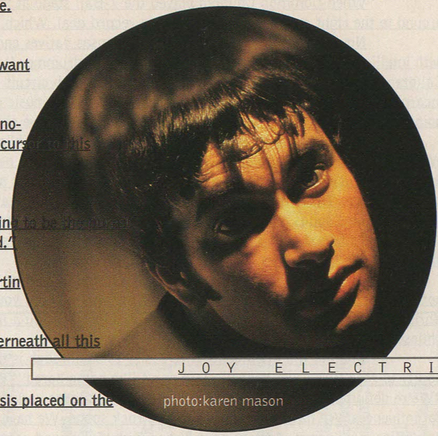
Martin first entered the Christian music scene seven years ago as a member of DanceHouse Children (later renamed Rainbow Rider), with his brother Jason. Martin eventually moved onto the current guise of Joy Electric, continuing his relentless pursuit of the perfect synthesized sound.

"It might take me three hours to get this one sound that you can barely hear, underneath all this stuff," Martin says. "I get real tedious. It drives me crazy and I hate it most of the time, but I like the end product."

What makes Joy Electric unique to the electronic experience is the highest emphasis placed on the vocals and melody. "That's the number one thing," Martin says. "I don't even attempt to sit down and try to work out anything until I can sing the song to the piano or the guitar. At the end of the day, you're not going to be humming some stupid little blippity-bleep sound, you're going to be humming the chorus."

One of Martin's greatest challenges, however, has been breaking into the Christian media. Despite the unique nature of Joy Electric's music — or perhaps because of it — Martin has been receiving more attention from the mainstream press. But instead of caving in to current trends, Martin keeps pushing the envelope of electronic-based music, looking for that "perfect pop song."

"I could easily pick up a guitar and start doing pop songs and I would get more attention," Martin says. "But it's like, attention for what? Sometimes I feel like I'm doing music in a vacuum. When I hear rock n' roll, it's too sloppy for me. I've got to have everything in perfect time. I want music to sound perfect. I guess that's what electronic music does for me." 7



JOY ELECTRIC

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FOREFRONT



By Chris Well

When Common Children played the 7-Ball stage at last summer's Cornerstone Festival, they were an unsigned band. When word of that show got around to the right sort of people, it led to a record deal. Which, of course, is how these things are supposed to work.

Now with a record in stores, the Arkansas natives can find a larger audience for their brand of smart rock, combining a broad dynamic range with intelligent lyrics. The former comes courtesy of drummer Hampton Eugene, 28, bassist Drew Powell, 26, and guitarist/vocalist Marc Byrd, 25. Common Children, together for 3 and a half years, played the club circuit in Arkansas regularly before moving to Nashville about a year ago. Byrd says their previous incarnation played a lot of churches, "but the heavier the music got, the harder it got to play churches. Plus, we wanted to move into a more poetic direction; going into college makes you think more about things. So, we changed to Common Children."

As chief lyricist, Byrd often combines a literate, philosophical bent with genuine, human vulnerability. Listing German philosophers, Walt Whitman, Steve Hindalong and G.K. Chesterton as influences, he says he doesn't set out to make heavy philosophical statements; his songs are just flavored that way. "I just try to write what I'm going through and be as honest as I can. I try to avoid making 'statements' as much as possible. Sure, there are some ... for instance, 'Drought,' which people might take wrong, is really about how dry some people become." Some songs are also very personal. "There are two songs on the album that deal with the death of a friend. But I don't want to go overboard, 'oh, he's dark, he's trying to be Jim Morrison,'" he smirks, "like I'm trying to force it."

On the other hand, Byrd agrees, it's impossible to be philosophical and not seem dark. "Biblical imagery is some of the darkest stuff you can read. Christianity deals with eternal issues, which should make you a little more philosophical."

Making the intelligent lyrics easier to sit through is the band's ability to rock. "We like dynamics; we don't like being bored," Byrd says. "We're definitely a rock n' roll band, but we have a large variety of musical influences. We have pop songs, we have rock songs. We have some borderline punk songs. And we have a song with violins and acoustic guitars. But we still maintain a style running throughout the album."

Byrd says traditionally they've never called themselves a "Christian rock" band. "We're from the South, and in the South when you say you're a 'Christian band,' there's a lot of baggage that comes with that. In Arkansas, they automatically think you're Carman or Petra; you don't ever get much modern Christian music in Arkansas at all, so in the South, there are a lot of stereotypes. But because of our lyrics, it would always come up in interviews; of course we're going to explain our songs, because our faith is so much a part of our lives." 7

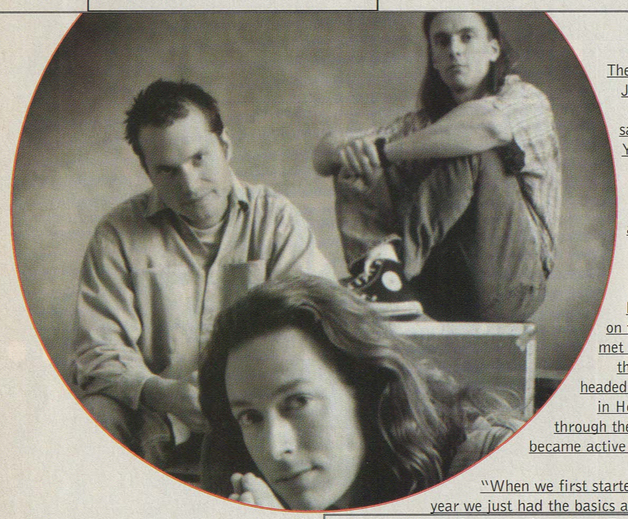
photo: norman roy



common children

COMMON CHILDREN

THE KRY



By Chad Bonham

The Kry sees the world as a wilderness in need of a Savior. Just as John the Baptist prepared the way of the Lord in Matthew 3:3, this trio from California hopes to do the same with its musical voice. Jean-Luc Lajoie, his brother Yves and Pete Nelson took their name from that popular Bible passage, but the Lajoies first had to be delivered out of their own personal wilderness.

"We were dreaming of going to Hollywood and making it big," Lajoie says. "We had no concept of following God or loving God. Music was our god for many years."

With little church experience to rely on, Jean-Luc was led to Calvary Chapel after stumbling across a preacher on the radio. There, he gave his heart to the Lord and soon met up with the youth pastor, who encouraged Lajoie to join the praise and worship team. At the same time, Yves was headed in the opposite direction, leaving Albuquerque for work in Houston; eventually, he was reached by the same message through the medium of television. He returned to Albuquerque and became active in the church's music ministry and the formation of the Kry was just around the corner.

"When we first started, there was a lot of hardship," Lajoie says. "That first year we just had the basics and not much extra equipment, but God makes all things beautiful in His time. That's the story of our lives. For the past four years, we've had to live the life of faith."

The Lajoies' trek to Albuquerque is somewhat an irony in itself. The Canadian brothers were not only uncomfortable in the desert heat, but they were also learning English in a city where 75 percent of the population speaks Spanish.

"I don't like deserts," Lajoie says. "But I look at the place now and I'm glad He brought me there. It was the last place I'd choose to be, but that's where we met God. For two guys from Quebec to end up in New Mexico and meet up with a guy who was born in Wisconsin, God's providence was pretty evident."

The Kry's latest project, The Kry Unplugged, presents the band's music in a stripped-down musical format. Much of their unique testimony is chronicled on the album's video counterpart. Also featured on the album is a hand-picked choir with such recording artists as Nicole, Troy Johnson, and Paul Q-Peck (formerly of One Bad Pig).

Although The Kry has garnered moderate radio and sales success, their modest approach underscores any popularity they've gained, emphasizing instead their immediate goal of "reaching the world." With trips to Austria, Hungary, Germany, Australia and France, along with extensive touring in the U.S., The Kry has certainly done its part.

"We feel like evangelizing the world is a big part of our ministry," Lajoie says. "There's a certain direction God is taking us. As long as it's God's will, then that's what we feel our mission is." 7

the kry



By Mark A. Smeby

The arrival of Dime Store Prophets on the current alter native rock scene is a refreshing substi tute. Maybe it's their rock-a-billy influenc combined with shades of Los Lobos and S Family Stone. With opportunities to open mainstream groups like Mudhoney and Better Than Ezra, and being voted one of the top 24 bands in the Bay area (by Band magazine), DSP is poised o drink with the real world — with a mes sage straight out of scripture.

The name "Dime Store Prophets" may have started out as a sarcastic mentary on the seemingly worthlessness of telev However, the name took on new meaning when the band members took stock of their own lives. Vocalist/guitarist Justin Stevens, guitarist/violinist Masaki and bassist Sam Hernandez realized that they — and every body else — are essentially worthless vessels of communication ... but the mes sage they share is invaluable.

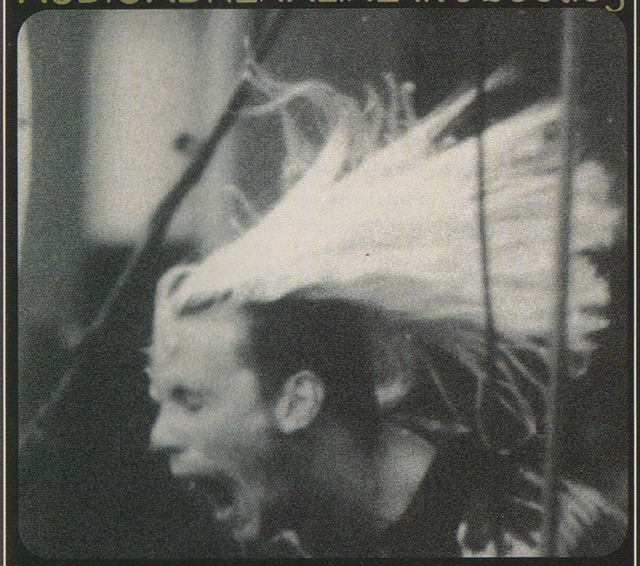
"To me," Stevens says, "it draws up a picture of someone with little significance saying something with incredible significance. One of the values we have as Dime Store Prophets is we're not going to hold back any punches ... we can be honest about molestation or talk ing about the love Jesus has for a hooker; we don't use these topics for shock value, because I don't believe in that, but we need to talk about things that maybe we're uncom fortable talking about. That, to me, is ministry."

A more tangible facet of the band's ministry came during their "Five Bucks And A Blanket Tour," with labelmates Black Eyed Sceva; concertgoers were asked to bring blankets to help out local homeless shelters. "That is really the essence of what I believe Dime Store Prophets is called to do," Masaki says, "to offer a ray of hope in the real world, as opposed to becoming rock stars. One thing I wish I could communicate to a lot of people is to be motivated by love. Be motivated by the love that Jesus put in you. It's one thing to be obedi ent ... it's another thing to be obedient because you want to be." 7

DIMESTORE PROPHETS

dimestore prophets

AUDIOADRENALINE live bootleg



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Choice Reviews.

JESUS FREAK
DC Talk
ForeFront



Like Chicken Little, some who had gotten hold of the single "Jesus Freak" had gone around halfcocked, shouting to everyone that DC Talk wasn't "pop," now they were "modern." Thankfully, once you hear the complete album Jesus Freak, you find it's a false alarm — oh, sure, there are guitars on this record, and bits of alternative rock here and there — but there are also grooves and slick melodies and sharp harmonies. DC Talk is, first and foremost, a pop group. Following a similar formula as Free At Last, with Jesus Freak DC Talk includes a much broader list of ingredients: You can tell they've been listening to an assortment of Motown, Adult Alternative, rap and rock records (including, most certainly, Charlie Peacock, Nirvana, Seal and Lenny Kravitz). Mixing these together, DC Talk has concocted a crisp pop album that covers a lot of bases — never gets boring — but is always centered by their strong harmonies and their malleable pop sensibilities. As usual, many of the lyrics deal with a variety of teen-peer-pressure topics, dealt with bluntly, yet with tact. Some highlights: "So Help Me God," fusing techno-babble with shrieking Hendrix guitars and a cloud of British harmonies, is a simple prayer for guidance; the gentle, acoustic, "What If I Stumble" considers the impact our lifestyle has on our witness; "Day By Day" incorporates the Broadway classic into a Lenny Kravitz-style retro-psychedelic romp; an edgy update of Charlie Peacock's bouncy pop gem "In The Light" (with guest appearance of the songwriter himself) struggles with the realization of our lostness without Christ. If a sterling pop-rock album weren't enough reason to make a purchase, then get it for the riotous lounge-praise version of "Jesus Freak." It's short, but you can always play it again.— Chris Well

TICKETS FOR A PRAYER WHEEL
Sixpence None The Richer
R.E.X.



One of the rampant misconceptions about Sixpence None The Richer is that they're never any fun; given the thoughtful, literate nature of Matt Slocum's songwriting, steeped in dark, realistic Scripture, as well as his literary influences, many listeners often miss the hopeful point of his work. Well, *Tickets For a Prayer Wheel*, essentially a companion piece to their brilliant *This Beautiful Mess* does double-duty, showing the band growing more closely-knit, but also showing they can have fun, too. Clocking in at something like 45 minutes (including the CD bonus tracks), this album-length "EP" has something for any fan of their brand of Adult Contemporary-friendly college pop (from the same genre that brought you The Cranberries and 10,000 Maniacs): Two versions of their wonderful "Within A Room Somewhere" (the radio edit and the demo version); new tracks "Healer" and "Dresses" are as catchy as any Sixpence has done; covers of Patsy Cline's "Love Letters In The Sand" and Leslie Phillips' "Carry You" are colored outside their usual lines; and two instrumental tracks to round out the collection. On the disc, there is also a strange dance remake of "Love, Salvation, The Fear Of Death." *Tickets* is a great showcase of where the band has been and where they are going; it's both a must for fans as well as a fair introduction to newcomers.— Ray Place



SONGS OF THE HEART
Daniel Amos
B.A.I.

With Songs From The Heart, the band Daniel Amos celebrates 20 years of their brilliant, sardonic diatribes against those who would dillute the ministry of the Church through greed, apathy or just plain stupidity. The alternative pioneers have also pretty much given up any hope of teen stardom. Musically on track with recent DA efforts, this is a guitar-centered album, with guitarists Greg Flesch and Jerry Chamberlain often balancing against each other, while bassist Tim Chandler and drummer Ed McTaggert, as always, remain rock steady as the foundation, providing a forum as simple or as wacky as the proceedings require. However, this is not as accesible an attack as Bibleland, which had a chance of competing with the more literate, guitar-rock bands on college radio; in fact, in some ways, Songs From The Heart is downright strange, whether it's the college rock (but pretty straight) reading of the Four Seasons classic "Can't Take My Eyes Off Of You" or the punk-squaredance (complete with undanceable time signature changes) of "Donna Nietzche And Her Super-Race Of Kickboxing Uber-Parrots." But then, tracks like "Organ Bar" are as remarkable for their hard-edged, Raymond Chandleresque delivery as they are for the vulnerability songwriter Terry Taylor has become brave enough to share; he no longer points an accusing finger without including himself in the lineup. The two closing songs, "When Everyone Wore Hats" and "My Hand To God" are as delicate and beautiful as anything Daniel Amos has ever accomplished, the former a remembrance of simpler, gentler times, the latter a sort of death bed love letter to a sweetheart. With Songs From The Heart, the members of Daniel Amos prove themselves once again to be more vibrant and intelligent than success would ever allow. — Scott W. Christopher

SWEET FAMILY MUSIC: A TRIBUTE TO STRYPER
Various Artists
Flying Tart/Liquid Disc

Some people are going to be shocked by Sweet Family Music: A Tribute To Stryper. This is an alternative album. It makes sense, though, when you think about it; when Stryper was current, the band competed with some of the mainstream's biggest acts ... that's the style of music people were listening to. Consequently, the best way to make "tribute" is to make these current again. Sweet Family Music certainly features some of the most current Christian rock bands, including Grammatrain, Joe Christmas and Morella's Forest. Some highlights: Aleixa turns in an extremely tasty pop/industrial take on "Makes Me Wanna Sing"; Steve Hindalong (of The Choir) turns in an ironic, acoustic version of "To Hell With The Devil"; and Cricket and Combat Chuck both make some very odd medleys in very hip fashion. However, the album stumbles a bit with Havalina Rail Co. (Cajun lounge-a-billy) and spoken word artist Ralph Melish (with noisy backup from Fluffy); these "novelty" schticks get old quick. By today's songwriting standards, there are no brilliant, misunderstood gems from the Stryper vault—and the modern rock arrangements sometimes make this more apparent (to be fair, you hardly expect Poison to make any grand political statements, either). But with some 18 tracks from a variety of cool artists, Sweet Family Music has something for pretty much any alternative fan.— Chris Well

REVIEWS.

reviews



RELEASE
Cloud Merchants
Salt, Inc

Riding a wave of lush art pop that conjures memories of mid-80's post-wave smart rock from the likes of Talk Talk (or the more recent debut from Cloud Merchant labelmates Quiet City), Release is a thoughtful entry from, presumably, a thoughtful band. The lead singer for Cloud Merchants, Michael Van Elk, croons with both conviction and subtlety, a veritable actor with broadly human, emotional range; when he sneers "I'm a big man" you dislike him, when he laments "I don't have any friends left," you feel genuine heartache. It is that spacious, emotional quality that gives Release an edge over a lot of one-note bands riding the circuit today. — Michael Thompson



LEMONADE
Leader Dogs For The Blind
R.E.X.

The cool irony of the debut from Leader Dogs For The Blind — essentially Lyndon Perry and friends — is that it gives "heavy metal" a good name. This project has generated a heavy buzz for its clean, aggressive take on hard rock; it's also drawn comparisons from a wide variety of sources, as listeners catch wind of the mumble-to-a-scream dynamic range of Filter, the sleek, flashy hard rock of White Zombie, the dark, angular chordplay of King's X and the muscular harmonics of Alice In Chains. Nice company, when you can keep it. However, while the other bands often use the sonic backdrop to discuss the darker issues of life — suicide, addiction, violence — Lemonade only rarely rises above the mundane. The title track, for instance, isn't just about "lemonade" — it's about a specific glass of lemonade. The common headbanger won't mind though; sometimes all that matters is the volume. And this is a mighty strong glass of Lemonade. — Scott Thurston



(GOLDEN)
RHYTHM SAINTS
N*SOUL

When you break down the "Golden Rule," its essentially about interpersonal relationships. Whether it's a coincidence, the second Rhythm Saints release, *(Golden)*, is also about interpersonal relationships. Once you get past the fabulous musical packaging — "British dance pop" in the finest, best sense — you notice these tracks explore relationships with friends, with love ones and with God. Add some eclectic pop culture influences — everything from Europop and New York House and Club music to Michael Crichton and Star Trek — and you've got a party in a box. The "Golden Rule" never sounded this good. Rhythm Saints have created some of the best, most accessible, most authentic dance music in the "Christian" marketplace, with strong, polyrhyhmic beats, strong, singable melodies and strong, fluid vocals — all wrapped around a strong, Christian message. *(Golden)* rules. — Chris Well



ASCENSION 7: ROCKETSHIP TO HEAVEN
Dighayzoose
B.A.I.

A live recording that captured the premature "farewell show" of Dighayzoose (they've since changed their minds) from Cornerstone '94, Ascension 7 is exactly what fans of Dig expect: raw in some places, gentle in others, and totally honest to the music. Even when tape quality is in question, they always defer to what best represents the true concert experience. There are some surprises, too, including appearances from Dan Michaels (The Choir) on sax and Allan Aguirre (Scaterd Few) on vocals. Dighayzoose have been developing a fan base expectant of their punk-meets-funk-meets-anything-goes style: Ascension 7 is the only kind of live album that would have worked. — CsW



MIRTH & MATTER
Eden Burning
R.E.X.

While Eden Burning has certainly endeared fans with their quirky brand of United Kingdom folk/adult alternative, their third import, Mirth & Matter, might help break them to a larger audience. With tighter, more electric arrangements that more closely resemble mainstream AAA, it's possible more modern rock fans will find something to their liking. Not that Eden Burning has sold out: The flavor is still very rich, combining the Black Eyed Sceva/Dave Matthews Band rootsy demeanor with a variety of acoustic instruments, including mandolin, harmonica, penny-whistle and a string quartet. Their British disposition also insures they cover their topics with a unique perspective. — Joe Minead





ARE WE NOT MEN?
WE ARE DEMO!
Various
R.E.X.

We Are Demo is an above-average collection of unsigned artists. Whereas most collections just prove many unsigned artists are unsigned for a reason, We Are Demo is a surprisingly listenable hodge podge of alternative rock styles: there's the sludgy garage rock of Rocket Boy, the schizoid "music/not music" bent of Four Living Creatures (it does grow on you), the psychedelic keyboard buzz of Mood Ring and the sweet, Tori Amos-wannabe (but pleasant enough) Agatha Parker Sterling. Not bad. — George Sterling

WE THE PEOPLE
Ken Tamplin
Rugged Records

Tamplin may be aiming his latest release at "we the people," but maybe we really should be referred to as "we the surprised"; the opener's chorus gives the listener a straight out salvation message, but those familiar with Tamplin may be pleading for salvation from the overt string section, horns and acoustic (?) guitars. What next? A praise and worship album? We shouldn't judge a work by what we expect, but by what the artist has actually created. Tamplin, the tight-trousered rocker from the 80s, has attempted to create an intelligent pop with We The People; whether that's your cup of tea or not, the man must be called a success: The lyrics are smart, the arrangements are inventive, and the singing is low key enough to fit the songs. Maybe detractors will just blame it all on loose fitting trousers. However, Tamplin has shown us yet another side of his musical personality, and we the people should be glad that he's letting us get to know him just a little bit better. — Dan MacIntosh



THE BERRY VEST
The Swirling Eddies
Alarma Records

The Swirling Eddies are wacky. And if you've been missing out, catch up with the restrospective Berry Vest, covering the three Eddies albums, plus a rare track and two unreleased tracks. The Swirling Eddies are, essentially, the sillier alter egos of the members of Daniel Amos (more or less). Vest showcases that; many of these songs, though, have very serious messages at their core: "Outdoor Elvis" lampoons Elvis and Bigfoot sightings, as well as those who invest hope in the wrong (and stupid) sources; "Hide The Beer, The Pastor's Here" harpoons legalism and hypocrisy in the church (that it's a controversial song only proves the point). Fans of the brightly-lit songs will probably be let down by the two bonus tracks (acoustic pieces from an unfinished Terry Taylor solo album); these are precious songs, but seem out of place. However, there is an extra, hidden track on the cassette (!), where Taylor reads an actual letter from a well-meaning, but insanely misguided "fan." It's very strange. — Jeff Williams

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reviews

REVIEWS



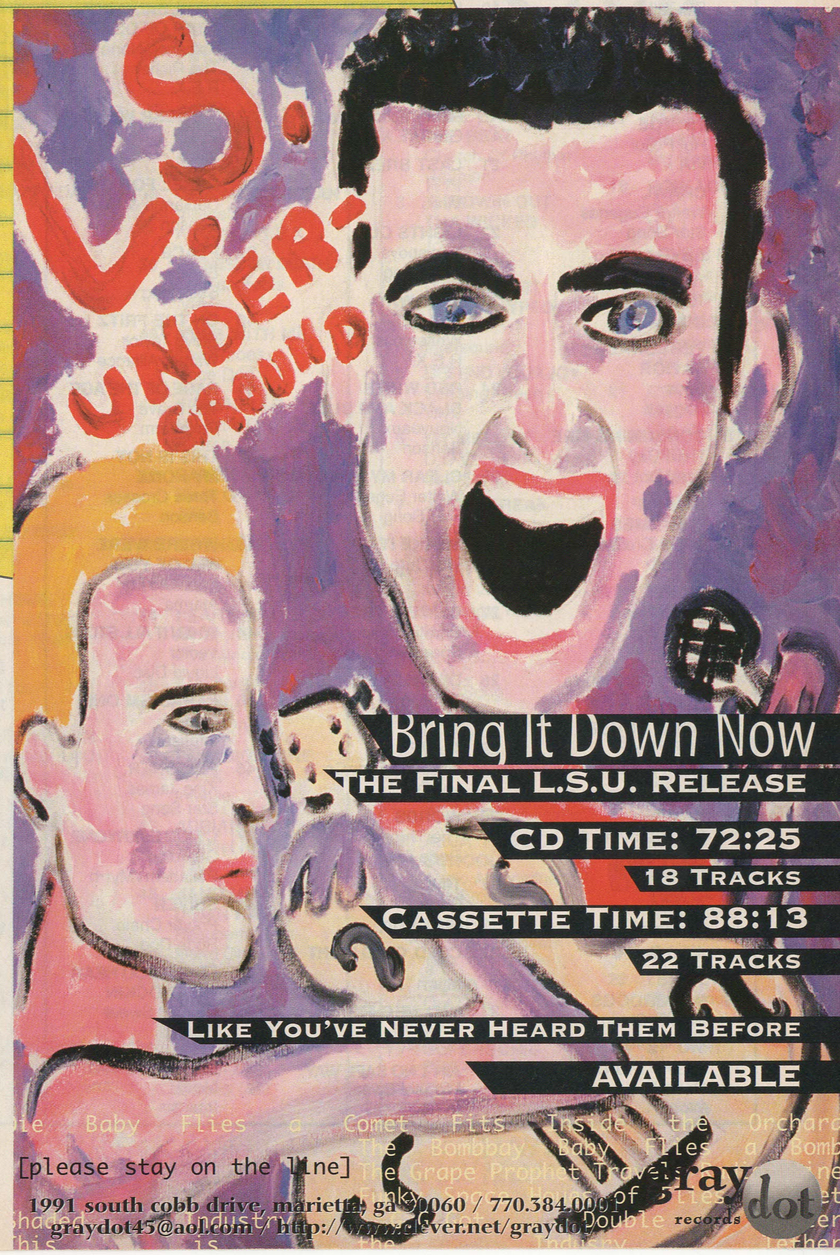
REFLESCENT TIDE
Reflescent Tide
Rugged Records

While this is as contemporary as some very popular bands on alternative radio, Reflescent Tide actually plays 70's-revivalist hard-rock, without the heavy art-rock wanderings that came later with Yes and Queen. Mixing even amounts of acoustic and electric guitars, the band is reminiscent at times of bands like Die Happy or later-period The Brave. It's not spectacular, but it is a promising debut. — Jeff Michaels

REV RUN PRESENTS
Various
RevRun Records

If you're expecting groundbreaking rap music from Run (from Run-D.M.C.) or Rev Run, as he now calls himself, then this sampler of three groups from his newly started label will be a bit of a disappointment. Run-D.M.C., an old school pioneer from the 80s, represented the cream of the rap music crop in its heyday; intuition tells one that Rev Run should have a better eye for talent than shown here. In fact, Soul Tempo isn't even rap, but an a cappella group; though they sing well, this music demands great singing to make a real impact. Sorry, but this ain't great. Sin Assassins is a group that Rev Run himself calls "street." While they may well be from the streets, by today's hard-core standards, they're closer to Straight Outa Nashville than they are to Straight Out Compton, and actually come off more as little more than choir boys. The third act, Zoe Brothers, mixes rap with some real singing, but do neither one of these convincingly enough to be taken seriously. Like all the other offerings here, the music is soft, the rhythms are lame, and lasting impression is written in invisible ink. Sadly, none of these performers are worthy to unlace Run's Adidas. It's (just) like that, and that's the way it is. — Dan MacIntosh

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pure rock report

most played 1995



Rock

1	**FLOOD** Jars Of Clay Essential	18	**ANGELTREAD** Sixpence None The Richer R.E.X.
2	**JESUS FREAK** DC Talk ForeFront	19	**I DON'T HEAR THE QUESTION** Clash Of Symbols Icehouse
3	**BODY BE** Johnny Q. Public Gotee	20	**IN CHANGE** Resurrection Band Grrr/R.E.X.
4	**TIP TOE** Hoi Polloi VIA	21	**LAST BREATH** PFR Vireo
5	**CRAWL** Walter Eugenes Star Song	22	**LIGHTS OUT** Newsboys Star Song
6	**HEADS I WIN, TAILS YOU LOSE** Tourniquet Intense	23	**FARAWAY PLACES** Whitecross R.E.X.
7	**PERSONAL SAVIOR** Bride Rugged	24	**RED WHITE BLACK AND BLUE** Nouveaux Benson
8	**CONSUMING FIRE** Third Day Grey Dot	25	**CLEAR MY HEAD** Walter Eugenes Star Song
9	**SIGN OF THE TIMES** Three Crosses Benson	26	**SHAKE IT UP** Idle Cure Salt
10	**INSIDE** White Heart Curb	27	**CLIMB A TREE** Charlie Peacock Sparrow
11	**FREE** Clash Of Symbols Icehouse/B.A.I.	28	**DEATH BY INCHES** Tamplin Benson
12	**OPEN HOUSE** Plank Eye Tooth & Nail	29	**ALIVE** Dakoda Motor Co Myrrh
13	**WAY HOME BACK** Guardian Pakaderm/Myrrh	30	**WORDS** The Throes Rode Dog
14	**RING TRUE** Poor Old Lu Alarma	31	**TIME** Bride Star Song
15	**WAKE THE DEAD** John Schlitt Word	32	**COLD, COLD NIGHT** 77's Myrrh
16	**WATERDOGS** Prayer Chain Rode Dog	33	**CALL ME CHRISTIAN** Villanelle Anastasia/R.E.X.
17	**RIGHT PLACE** Petra Word	34	**AIN'T NO SAFE WAY** Michael Sweet Benson
		35	**STATE OF YOUR AMERICA** Imagine This Essential
		36	**LOVE, SALVATION, FEAR OF DEATH** Sixpence None The Richer R.E.X.
		37	**WONDER WHY** PFR Vireo
		38	**REBEL FOR GOD** DeGarmo & Key Benson
		39	**PLACE** Bride Star Song
		40	**ON THE FRITZ** Steve Taylor Warner Alliance
		41	**RAGE OF THE AGE** The Brave Pakaderm
		42	**THIS IS NOT MY HOME** Three Crosses Benson
		43	**WHERE WERE ALL OF YOU** Poor Old Lu Alarma
		44	**WHEN IT ALL STOPS** Vector Liquid Disc
		45	**PARADIGM ONE** Mortal Intense
		46	**PRISONER** King James Star Song
		47	**C'MON EVERYONE** Guardian Pakaderm/Myrrh
		48	**SHIVER** Prayer Chain Rode Dog
		49	**I THINK YOU HEAR ME KNOCKIN** Michael Sweet Benson
		50	**MOTHER'S DAY** Mortal Intense

Loud

1	**STENCH** Everdown Tooth & Nail	16	**POWER OF GOD** Crucified Ocean
2	**ANGRY SON** Six Feet Deep R.E.X.	17	**NICE GUY** Fell Venus VIA
3	**WEAKNESS** The Blamed Tooth & Nail	18	**STONE** Sometime Sunday Tooth & Nail
4	**STAND TOGETHER** Strongarm Tooth & Nail	19	**SO FAR AWAY** Precious Death Metro One
5	**SELF** Sometime Sunday Tooth & Nail	20	**GREEN** Wish For Eden Tooth & Nail
6	**AMERICANISM** MxPx Tooth & Nail	21	**SPARE CHANGE** Blenderhead Tooth & Nail
7	**SEEN IT ALL** Mortification Intense	22	**HAVEN** Blenderhead Tooth & Nail
8	**ACID HEAD** Tourniquet Intense	23	**INTO THE UNKNOWN** Rose R.E.X.
9	**EMPTY** Focused Tooth & Nail	24	**CONDEMNATION** Six Feet Deep R.E.X.
10	**REALIZE** MxPx Tooth & Nail	25	**INTERNALIZE** Blenderhead Tooth & Nail
11	**FORWARD** Focused Tooth & Nail	26	**RATTLE YOUR CAGE** Barren Cross Rugged
12	**YOU CAN'T BREAK ME** Precious Death Metro One	27	**DUST TO DUST** Red Sea Rugged
13	**DOOMSAYER** Argyle Park R.E.X.	28	**MIRROR** Resurrection Band Grrr/R.E.X.
14	**HISTORY LESSON #1** Crashdog Grrr/R.E.X.	29	**MOURNING BY NIGHT** Jesus Freaks Narrowpath
15	**GEORGE'S POEM** Crashdog Grrr/R.E.X.	30	**BREATHING MURDER** Living Sacrifice R.E.X.

pure rock report

most played 1995



Modern Rock

1	**RING TRUE** Poor Old Lu Alarma	17	**WINDOW** Alternative Worship Frontline
2	**OPEN HOUSE** Plank Eye Tooth & Nail	18	**STUNNED** The Throes Rode Dog
3	**WORDS** The Throes Rode Dog	19	**ONE DAY** Havalina Rail Co Tooth & Nail
4	**ANGELTREAD** Sixpence None The Richer R.E.X.	20	**HANG OUT** Morella's Forest Tooth & Nail
5	**WATERDOGS** Prayer Chain Rode Dog	21	**BIG FAT HAPPY DAY** Hoi Polloi VIA
6	**PUNK RAWK SHOW** MxPx Tooth & Nail	22	**FREEDOM** L.S.U. Alarma
7	**WHERE WERE ALL OF YOU** Poor Old Lu Alarma	23	**ISRAEL** The Waiting Anastasia/R.E.X.
8	**TIP TOE** Hoi Polloi VIA	24	**SOLITAIRE** Sunday's Child Blind
9	**I DON'T HEAR THE QUESTION** Clash Of Symbols Icehouse	25	**FREE** Clash Of Symbols Icehouse/B.A.I.
10	**BLAME** L.S.U. Alarma	26	**SPECKLED BIRD** The Choir R.E.X.
11	**JUSTIFIED** Black Eyed Sceva Five Minute Walk	27	**FINEST HOUR** My Brother's Mother Five Minute Walk
12	**LOVE, SALVATION, FEAR OF DEATH** Sixpence None The Richer R.E.X.	28	**BLISS IS** Poor Old Lu Alarma
13	**SHIVER** Prayer Chain Rode Dog	29	**SOWING IN THE SUN** Rose Blossom Punch Tooth & Nail
14	**LE VAINQUEUR** Starflyer 59 Tooth & Nail	30	**DO YOU EVER FEEL THAT WAY** Starflyer 59 Tooth & Nail
15	**WANT AD** MxPx Tooth & Nail	31	**AN APOLOGY** Sixpence None The Richer R.E.X.
16	**BODY BE** Johnny Q. Public Gotee	32	**STROBE** Adam Again B.A.I.
		33	**CONSUMING FIRE** Third Day Grey Dot
		34	**FLOOD** Jars Of Clay Essential
		35	**SHE** Sometime Sunday Tooth & Nail
		36	**I WILL** Curious Fools VIA
		37	**AMAZING** The Choir R.E.X.
		38	**CALL ME CHRISTIAN** Villanelle Anastasia/R.E.X.
		39	**WITNESS MY DEATH** Curious Fools VIA
		40	**MESS WITH ME** The Throes Rode Dog
		41	**EGGSHELLS** My Little Dog China Alarma
		42	**SAME OLD STORY** Black Cherry Soda VIA
		43	**MOTHER'S DAY** Mortal Intense
		44	**HEART OF GOLD** My Brother's Mother Five Minute Walk
		45	**ALL OVER NOW** Precious Death Metro One
		46	**PARADIGM ONE** Mortal Intense
		47	**ADRIAN** Michael Knott B.A.I.
		48	**HAND ME DOWN HATE** Raspberry Jam Metro One
		49	**BLUE SKIES** Velocipede R.E.X.
		50	**HAZEL WOULD** Starflyer 59 Tooth & Nail

Club

1	**BACK IN THE DAY** Mike E Big Doggie	16	**EVERYBODY** Gina N*Soul
2	**TAKE BACK THE BEAT** Church Of Rhythm Reunion	17	**TAKE A RIDE** Mike E Big Doggie
3	**THROWIN OUT THA WICKED** T-Bone Metro One	18	**HOW I COPE** SFC B.A.I.
4	**IT'S ALRIGHT TA GET HYPED** 1 Way Intersound	19	**LOVE IS FOREVER** Greg Strange Narrowpath
5	**DEFEND YOUR JOY** Echoing Green Myx	20	**REAL GOOD THING** Newsboys Star Song
6	**MY MELODY** D.O.C. Star Song	21	**COME AND TAKE MY HAND** Out Of Eden Gotee
7	**JESUS FREAK** DC Talk ForeFront	22	**MORE ABOUT YOU** Eric Champion Myrrh
8	**IN MY LIFE** World Wide Message Tribe N*Soul	23	**SHOW ME** Out Of Eden Gotee
9	**K.I.S.S.** D.O.C. Star Song	24	**LUV IS A VERB** DC Talk ForeFront
10	**FALLEN IN LOVE** Limit X N*Soul	25	**WITHOUT REASON** Code Of Ethics ForeFront
11	**40** Disco Saints Star Song	26	**THEY THAT WAIT** Disco Saints Star Song
12	**A.K.A. PUBLIC SCHOOLS** Audio Adrenaline ForeFront	27	**STICKS & STONES** Code Of Ethics ForeFront
13	**MOBBIN'** Gospel Gangstas Myx	28	**WHERE ARE YOU GOING** World Wide Message Tribe N*Soul
14	**GOOD THING** Out Of Eden Gotee	29	**I BELIEVE** Mindbender N*Soul
15	**SUPERSONIC DREAM DAY** Ian Reunion	30	**UP ON IT** YWFC Big Doggie Records

Charts are reprinted courtesy of the Pure Rock Report,
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Write: 1400 Restwood Court, Columbus, OH 43204

BLAH BLAH BLAH
By Chris Well

As we put 1995 to rest and now look towards 1996, the one thing that stands out is we're still waiting for our next "The Beatles."

Sure, the point was hammered in with the 6-hour Beatles Anthology and the double-disc release last fall (volume 2 releases next month). For all that's happened in music over the course of the past 25 years, everyone you listen to is influenced by or affected by The Beatles: Prayer Chain and PM Dawn, King's X and Michael W. Smith, Freedom of Soul and The Rembrandts, Matthew Sweet and U2—no matter who you listen to, they learned music in world made by The Beatles.

When 7-ball Art Director Paul Venaas and I once watched the Beatles movie Help! (which shows they practically invented music videos), he remarked: "It's cool to think we're seeing some of this stuff being done for the very first time." It was amazing to see how fresh and timely the music and the photography was, all these years later.

I bring this point up because of the famous observation, "If we ignore history, we are doomed to repeat it." Although I suspect the phrase was invented to discuss something a little more important than pop music, it's a good piece of music criticism, as well. I fear too many alternative fans think The Beatles are not relevant to today's music—and then listen to countless hours of Beatles rip-offs on their local modern rock station.

Educate yourself. If you limit yourself to a narrow band of "artists," then you are dooming your favorite artform to a state of stupidity. Listen to what's gone on before, and listen to more examples of what's going on now. If you never listen to new things, new ideas, if you continue to pass judgment on artists you've never actually listened to—then you will always endorse the least interesting, and least inventive, artists.

Which sort of explains the ongoing state of "Christian music," doesn't it?

Not that "Christian music" hasn't improved by leaps and bounds; in fact, 1995 was a pretty good year. Here are some of the better albums of this year (all of which were created in a world made by The Beatles).

The Prayer Chain arguably turned in the best album of 1995: Mercury may not have been the mosh delight of Shawl, but the band treaded into fresh, intelligent territory—patient listeners were rewarded with a work of intense subtlety, modern rock for the thinking man (musically and lyrically), which will long outlast the flash-in-the-pans of the week.

Morella's Forest, 100 Days, Black Eyed Sceva and This Train were just a few of the promising debuts that came out this year. Morella's Forest buries their words on Super Deluxe, but the lush, crisp arrangements of an angel's voice over razor-edged noise pop makes it worth waiting to see what they have to say.

100 Days writes clever, honest songs about relationships (including a couple of "how-not-to's") on The Obvious, combined with classic pop harmonies and art-rock flourishes.

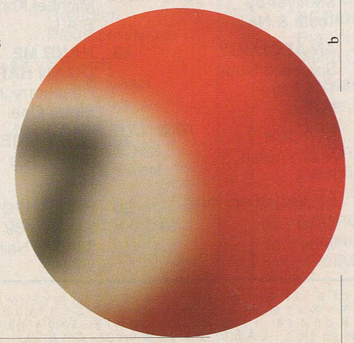
Black Eyed Sceva serves heavy slices of philosophy and theology (as well as personal heartbreak), set to breezy, rootsy, college pop on Way Before The Flood. This Train proved with You're Soaking In It that you can have a silly first single (a rockabilly remake of "Baby Baby") and still have a very smart album; they wrap songs about love and hope and broken dreams (and Mister Rogers) with a modern brand of post-rockabilly that is way more fun than it sounds on paper.

The veterans turned in some gems, as well. Adam Again's Perfecta sported dark and sturdy rock n' roll, with lyrics reminding listeners that even Christians have to deal with broken relationships and regret. The band Daniel Amos celebrated 20 years with Songs From The Heart, which is a pretty strange collection (Bibleland proved they could do college guitar rock with the best of them; Songs From The Heart proves they don't care); of special note is that, although they still poke fingers at those who would cheat the Church for personal gain, they also acknowledge on Songs that they're just as responsible for the failings of the church as anyone. It's as vulnerable as it's brilliant.

Sixpence None The Richer and Hoi Polloi, two bands that don't fit in either the "debut" or the "veterans" category, also turned in some of the best work this year. Sixpence None The Richer's full-length This Beautiful Mess last spring and their extended-play Tickets For A Prayer Wheel showed songwriter Matt Slocum's penchant for turning Ecclesiastes (it's in the Bible) and literature into pop music, while the rest of the players (growing ever more tightly into a rock band) gave an increasingly sturdy pedestal for Leigh Bingham, one of the brightest voices in college rock today. Hoi Polloi had a comeback of sorts with Happy Ever After, the first record to truly unleash New Zealand's finest rock n' roll band; flavored with a hint of grunge, the foursome cranked out loud but complex pop music, with the rich-voiced Jenny Gullen singing of irony, spirituality and love distant and nearby.

Ultimately, rock criticism is a useless art; none of this is going to change the price of shoes. Some of us, however, treasure music as much as we treasure breathing—to people like us, it's heartening to know there were releases of this caliber in the past year. And, better yet, there were some great releases that would easily have made this list if I were in a different mood.

Although it may be impossible for another Beatles to come along, it's nice to know that some bands are handling their share of the legacy so well. 7



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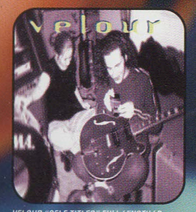


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